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ABSTRACT

his paper describes the validity and value of self-study and action research by a cooperating teacher, supervisors, and a principal who were involved in a school-university partnership at the University of New Hampshire. The self-study and action research projects were completed by participants enrolled in a course, "Developmental Perspectives on Adulthood." Projects focused attention on linkages between adult development theory and supervision. The paper describes key ideas from each research project, focusing on (1) self-study research: a principal's perspective on collaborative supervision and teacher and school development; a teacher's inquiry into her own self-directed development and experiences in collaborative supervision; teacher development (a close look at secondary school interns); and developing an awareness of complex issues and skills for successful teaching; and (2) action research: teacher development steps for preservice exploring teachers; investigating interns' needs for structure and flexibility; and supporting the teacher as learner. The paper considers questions that can be asked about the emphasis in these projects on developmental theory and discusses attributes of the action research and self-study research that made the research valuable and valid for collaborative supervision in school-university partnerships (Contains 27 references.) (SM)

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Action Research and Self-Study by Supervisors, Cooperating Teachers, and School Principals Working with Interns in School-University Partnerships

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Action Research and Self-Study by Supervisors, Cooperating teachers, and School Principals Working with Interns in School-University Partnerships

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Paper presented in the symposium titled:
Validity and Value of Multiple Methods to Assess a Five-Year Teacher Ed. Program
AERA, April 3, 2002

In this paper I seek to describe and document action research and self-study research as examples of embedded assessments of the University of New Hampshire teacher education program. The research was undertaken by individual participants in the school-university collaborative that operates in the broadest sense of professional development partnerships.[1] The paper describes the validity and value of self-study and action research studies by a cooperating teacher, supervisors, and a principal who are participants in the school-university partnerships. The area of self-study research is growing rapidly, having been strongly influenced by the re-emergence of action research and its variations over the last 15 years (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). If we think of the self-study and action research as embedded assessments, the participants are doing the research and gaining in their own professional and personal development as a result of doing the research.

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[1] School-university partnerships can be defined narrowly or broadly. In the narrowest sense, a school might act as clinical site for placement of a student teacher (Wilson et al., 2001). In the broadest sense schools may partner with a university teacher education program to become professional development sites (for example, Bullock, 2001; Butler et al., 2001). The following criteria generally define professional development partnerships between schools and the college/university in the education of teachers; 1) commitment to professional development of all teachers at all levels, 2) focus on preservice teacher preparation and support for teacher learning in the course of teaching, 3) teaching is grounding in a professional knowledge base, 4) mutual benefits exist for both school and university partners, and 5) partners are energetic and collegial in seeking ways to improve pupil achievement (NCATE, 1998).

A nationally funded collaborative action research in supervision project was undertaken by principals, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors in five schools and the university in 1985 to 1988.[2] Outcomes included a growing sense of mutual accountability for collaborative supervision for the year-long internship and continuing cycles of action research on supervision by participants over an extended period of time. A School-University Collaborative in Teacher Education was formed in 1988; it grew from a task force of school and university folks in 1985-1988 who (with the help of their colleagues in five schools and the university) investigated and created a prototype for collaborative supervisory concepts (Oja, 1990-91). The resulting structure of collaborative supervision has grown to include a cadre of almost 25 partnership schools (elementary and secondary) where clusters of six or more candidates are placed for the culminating year-long internship. The internship (Corcoran and Andrew, 1987) is the capstone and endpoint of the UNH five-year teacher preparation program. Collaborative supervision partnerships between schools and the University of New Hampshire can be described by the following characteristics. 1) Six interns are placed with six cooperating teachers in each of the partnership schools. 2) There is a school commitment to supervision of interns and professional development of teachers. 3) There is a university commitment to placing one supervisor for a period of three or more years at the same

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[2] Oja, S. N. (1988). Program assessment report: A collaborative approach to leadership in supervision. Part B of the Final Report to the US Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Durham, NH: Department of Education Collaborative Research Projects.

Oja, S. N., & Ham, M. C. (1988). Project portrayal: A collaborative approach to leadership in supervision. Part A of the Final Report to the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Development. Durham, NH: Department of Education collaborative Research Projects.

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school. 4) UNH and the schools collaborate in a placement process during which candidates observe numerous teachers leading to a mutual contract with one cooperating teacher for the internship year. 5) UNH and the schools work together to refine and further develop the collaborative supervision partnerships.

Mutually shared accountability in creating and managing our collaborative supervision partnerships includes responsibilities that are taken on by the following kinds of groups: 1) the School-University Collaborative in Teacher Education includes the principal, a cooperating teacher and the supervisor from each partnership school site (meets bimonthly to mange the process of collaborative supervision), 2) the UNH Teacher Education Committee (meets every two weeks to manage and monitor the entire teacher education program) and its field experiences subcommittee (meets every month or two as needed), 3) the Elementary and Secondary Supervisors Groups (meet every two weeks), 4) the TRIAD group of intern, cooperating teacher, and supervisor (meets monthly at the intern's school), and 5) the Collaborative Supervisory Team of cooperating teachers, supervisor, and often the principal (usually meets monthly at each school). These groups serve as communities for both inquiry and support in the collaborative supervision partnerships (Oja, Diller, Corcoran, and Andrew, 1992). The dual function of inquiry and support is necessary for professional development (Oja and Reiman, 1998). We continually move toward a manner of operating in these groups that reflects key elements of a collaborative action research process (Oja & Pine, 1987): non-hierarchical self-management; norms of collegiality and experimentation; power diffused among members; members having the flexibility to take on a variety of roles and

responsibilities; a setting of pause, reflective thinking, cognitive expansion; members who share in the decision-making.

Mutual accountability for continuing our collaborative supervision partnerships also includes responsibilities taken on by individuals – the cooperating teachers, school principals, and university supervisors who seek to improve their work with each other and with interns. We have developed three university courses to meet the professional development goals of these individuals in the school-university partnerships. [The university supports continuing professional development by providing each year to cooperating teachers a course waiver that means they can take any four-credit course free of charge.] Two of the courses are outlined here briefly while the third course is described more fully because it most closely has continued to focus on the collaborative supervision concepts of action research, developmental theory, and differentiated supervision, and the third course was the context that provided the encouragement and support for the action research and self-study projects described in later sections of the paper.

Of the three courses, one course in collaborative models of supervision was developed in 1990 to meet the professional development needs of new cooperating teachers and supervisors. It focuses on the clinical supervision model and classroom observation strategies. All new cooperating teachers and new supervisors are encouraged to participate in this semester long seminar during their first fall semester with an intern. Cooperating teachers are encouraged to enroll in the seminar in school groups for added support when each tries out some supervisory strategies as they work with the intern in the classroom. Over the 1990's the concepts of co-teaching and co-learning have become

even more characteristic of our cooperating teacher – intern relationships. After the course some cooperating teachers and supervisors go back to their schools and provide informal workshops in supervision for other teachers who are mentoring beginning teachers. The individuals from the course in Fall, 2001, wrote a short handbook on observation strategies for cooperating teachers that will posted on the UNH Teacher Education website so that it is available to all cooperating teachers and supervisors. A second course focusing on analysis of teaching was developed about 1995, and it is gaining interest among individuals in the collaborative supervision partnerships. The course provides the opportunity for individuals to investigate their own classroom teaching practices. Cooperating teachers and supervisors in the course learn classroom research methodology; and subsequently, these individuals find themselves better able to support their teaching interns who are completing curriculum action research projects as part of the required Program Portfolio.

The third course focuses on using adult development perspectives in one's work. This graduate course has been a vehicle for principals, cooperating teachers, and supervisors from 1988 to the present to investigate adult development in relation to their own practices in the supervising and mentoring in our school-university partnerships. The concepts of the course (action research, adult development, and supervision) focus on growth toward stages of adult development that enable a more democratic view of teaching and supervision; this challenges more traditional forms of control in supervision and supports growth of more just and caring teachers and supervisors. Although action research takes many forms, key conditions include open lines of communication, democratic styles of leadership, spiraling cycles of planning, acting, and reflection, and

structures that encourage and support experimentation (Oja & Smulyan, 1989). Brennan and Noffke (1997) emphasize that democratic outcomes are essential to action research

The self-study and action research projects to be described in the next sections of this paper were completed by participants enrolled in the third course, titled 'developmental perspectives on adulthood.' The projects focus attention on the linkages between adult development theory and supervision. During the action research process of the course the knowledge bases in supervision and teacher development are neither prescribed nor interpreted in a limited fashion. Instead, each individual negotiates the scope of the two areas and forms initial boundaries for the topics, concerns, problems, and issues to be further investigated. All participants are active to examine, reflect, and evaluate the knowledge bases and their own practice, so that both inform each other. Supervisors and mentors learn about developmental theory, investigate alternative supervision strategies, and carry out self-study and action research to attempt to vary their supervision practices according to the capabilities, variety, and flexibility observed in their supervisees. Supervisors and cooperating teachers working in school-university partnerships attempt to support the intern in new learning experiences and challenge the intern's development to new levels. Practical and theoretical knowledge interact continuously as participants work through the cycles of action research to further analyze, understand, and evaluate their supervisory behaviors. Each course participant commits to explore deeply at least one of the major developmental theories in adult ego/self development, moral/ethical development, conceptual/intellectual development, or interpersonal development. In all cases, a portion of each class session is devoted to participants meeting in self-chosen groups to collectively share their ideas and plans,

discuss their struggles and report the outcomes of their cycles of action research. A highlight at the end of the course is a mini-conference where participants investigating similar theories and evidence in relation to their particular practice collaboratively present symposiums on their action research; they share anticipated and unanticipated outcomes, surprises, and plans for future cycles of research.

Some course participants choose to work on a collaborative action research project as did Elizabeth Chamberlain, Mary Jane Moran, and Mildred Struck. Others undertook individual action research projects as did Nancy Frane and Jim Jelmberg. And still others chose to do research that is more similar to self-study research as did Dennis Harrington, Linda Dagenais Preston, Stacey Gauthier, and Katharina Fachin Lucas. The examples in this paper are drawn from a larger pool of action research projects that have been completed by principals, cooperating teachers and supervisors over that last fifteen years. The supervisors' action research projects show different approaches to investigating similar questions in the new role of supervisor. Many of the action researchers described in the sections that follow were interviewed some years after completing their research projects, and they wrote retrospective accounts of the impact of the action research projects on their lives and work.

Following the descriptions of the key ideas from each research project, I consider some questions that can be asked about the emphasis in these projects on developmental theory. Then in the summary analysis I discuss attributes of the action research and self-study research that make the research valid and valuable for collaborative supervision in our school-university partnerships

Self-Study Research

A Principal's Perspectives on Collaborative Supervision and Teacher and School Development.

Dennis Harrington was principal of Maple Wood elementary school that was a part of the original collaborative supervision project in 1985-1988 that was undertaken by five schools and the university in the development of today's collaborative supervision concepts. In 1989 Dennis Harrington became principal at the new Moharimet elementary school. He and the school's teachers continue to work closely in partnership with the university education department for placement of six interns per year, collaborative supervision by cooperating teachers and a university supervisor, and continued active participation in the school-university collaborative in teacher education. His action research write-up (Harrington, 1999) begins with a piece he wrote in 1988 and ends with his reflections in summer of 1998. During the initial collaborative supervision project Dennis Harrington became quite interested in adult development as an explicit goal of teacher staff development and the possible application to his practice as principal of the school and evaluator/supervisor of teachers in the school. He documented some of his supervisory interactions with teachers who he was supervising and began to further reflect upon the characteristics of teachers in post-conventional autonomous stages of development. His action research narrative emphasizes the distinction between the more advanced autonomous stage and the prior individualistic stage, and he shows how recognizing the benefits and

limitations of individualism has influenced his thinking about school organization and school restructuring in ways that support continued teacher development towards autonomy. [3]

At the meetings of the school-university collaborative and the coordinating board of the Unit for Professionals in Education at the university, to which Dennis Harrington was elected by constituents of the school-university collaborative, Dennis would mention his developing thoughts about the tensions between individualistic and autonomous teachers and how his continuing re-thinking and refining of these two concepts in his work was not only helping to clarify his own goals in the principalship but also helping him to clarify to his staff what he is meaning when he urges them toward greater collaboration and connection. Dennis Harrington's self-study typifies his continuing cycles of reflection and action on the concepts of teacher autonomy. Key ideas from his action research narrative are 1) recognizing the importance to continuing development of teachers taking on significant new roles in classrooms and schools, 2) a principal's involvement in supporting new roles for teachers, 3) an interpretation of a school context in terms of adult development theory, 4) the establishment of Moharimet School's 'early morning dialogue' as a school wide strategy that promotes teacher growth from individualism to an autonomous and interdependent community, and 5) the structure of Moharimet elementary school that is a long term partner with the university for the preparation of beginning teachers.

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3 Jane Loevinger (1976, 1998) defined the benefits and limitations of each stage: At the INDIVIDUALISTIC stage, a sense of individuality is of utmost concern, coupled with heightened awareness of emotional dependence on others. There is increased ability to tolerate paradoxical and contradictory relationships between events in contrast to earlier stages where individuals attempt to eliminate paradoxes by reducing them to polar opposites. There is also greater complexity in conceptualizing interpersonal interactions. The distinguishing characteristic at the next AUTONOMOUS stage is one's capacity to tolerate and cope with the inner conflict that arises between conflicting perspections, needs, ideals, and duties. One is able to unite ideas that appear as ambiguous or incompatible options to persons at prior stages. In particular, one acknowledges other persons' needs for autonomy to make their own choices and solutions and to learn from their own mistakes. At the same time, one realizes the limitations of autonomy; consequently, mutual interdependence is highly valued in interpersonal relationships. One is concerned with self-fulfillment, differing perceptions of one's role, and issues of justice in addition to being concerned about the individuality and achievement issues of prior stages.

A Teacher's Inquiry into Her Own Self-Directed Development and Experiences in Collaborative Supervision.

Linda Dagenais, (1988) a teacher in Maple Wood School, was one of the original cooperating teachers in the 1985-1988 collaborative supervision project. She completed action research on a self-directed model of supervision. She developed this personal model as an alternative to the supervision/evaluation practices that she had received in her teaching career. Her action research uses a self-directed model of supervision to investigate her teaching strategies with children in her classroom, her self-knowledge and learning during different phases of her adult life, her work as a cooperating teacher with interns, and her own professional growth across the span of her career.

Linda Dagenais revisited her action research write-up 10 years later, and her retrospective thoughts shed light on her development over the last ten years and illustrate her continuing use of ideas of adult development and collaborative supervision. They reveal 1) Linda's further testing of the self-directed model for supervisors, and 2) the risktaking she took on to assume the challenges of a different role, that of a teacher of gifted and talented students in another school. 3) Linda Dagenais emphasizes the value of self-reflection as she further describes the personal and professional challenges of a move to another school in a different state that was initiated by her commitment to care for her aging and ailing parents.. In the action research and retrospective thoughts by Linda Dagenais Preston we glimpse the adult development ages and stages and how they may occur in the life of one teacher. 4) At the end of her retrospective account, Linda adds 5) new sections to her career development chart that was begun 10 years earlier and 6) a new professional plan of action for the 1999 school year.

Teacher Development: A Close Look at Secondary School Interns

Stacey Gauthier, (1992) a university supervisor for three years, uses a model of conceptual development as she investigates the supervisor-intern partnership with a group of secondary school interns. The major focus of her action research study revolves around a view of the intern as epistemologist and manager of instruction. 1) She asserts that how the intern teachers think about and act out the instructional managerial role will relate closely with intellectual-conceptual development and will give insights about the interns' conceptions of the nature of teaching and learning and their roles as transmitters or facilitators. 2) She refers to levels of value/moral judgment as she discussed the interns' ability to resist authoritarianism and to act autonomously on the basis of principles. 3) She uses the literature on adult ego development as she describes how the interns view themselves in terms of being agents of social conformity, or self-directed achievement, or mutual interdependence. 4) Key to her study are the in-depth descriptions of the developmental characteristics of a group of secondary school interns. A supervisor's knowledge of these characteristics is important, she concludes, for three reasons. (a) The knowledge provides a foundation for the supervisor to diagnose specific needs and abilities of the intern. (b) It offers a guide for ways of challenge/support and for choosing activities that focus on intern's personal and professional growth. (c) It serves as a basis for planning interventions to promote developmental growth. Six years later, in her retrospective thoughts, she poignantly revisits the tensions she felt in the dual role of supervisor and researcher during the study.

Stimulating Reflective Judgment: Developing an Awareness of Complex Issues and Skills for Successful Teaching

Katharina Fachin Lucas (1997) focuses on Robert Kegan's theory of development (1994) as a particularly helpful backdrop to her goal of stimulating reflective judgment and developing within interns as awareness of complex skills for successful teaching. Her study is both a narrative of three year's self-study as a supervisor of elementary interns and a summary of structures and supports during the internship year that she has tried and modified. Her study moves through three aspects of teaching. (1) Curriculum and instruction is a context for developing reflective judgment at work. (2) Professional development is a context for developing self-guided reflection and goal-setting. 3) Professionalism, the third aspect, focuses on how to scaffold interns' exploration and development of cohesive philosophies of education. She concludes by describing her additional use of the theory of proximal development to mentor interns.

Action Research

Teacher Development Steps for Preservice Exploring Teachers

Jim Jelmberg (1992) was a participant of the original collaborative supervision project during 1985-86. That project applied the ideas of collaborative action research and differentiated supervision to the development of adults in several different groups: a) graduate students already admitted to the 5-year teacher preparation program who were working in the full-year teaching internship; b) cooperating teachers, school principals, and university supervisors who were mentoring the interns; and c) university undergraduates who were exploring teaching as a career by enrolling in an exploring teaching course that is required as a prerequisite for admission to the 5-year teacher

preparation program. Jim Jelmberg, a middle school teacher, supervised the exploring teachers in his middle school who are enrolled in the early field experience to explore a teaching career at the middle school level. Jim Jelmberg was a full-time teacher and was also able to take on this additional role as a university adjunct faculty member to supervise fifteen university students who spend 5 hours a week (a total of 65 hours over one semester) in classrooms with teachers in his school. As part of the university course requirements Jim facilitates an after school seminar once a week that helps the exploring teachers make a reasoned career choice. Key points in his action research study are: (1) his action research investigates what aspects of the classroom experiences and seminar requirements in the exploring teaching course may provide both the support and challenge necessary for pre-service teacher development and (2) he defines pre-service teacher development as a change in outlook or practice that would represent growth toward the abstract thinking that a teacher needs to use to solve more complex instructional problems.

Investigating Interns' Needs for Structure and Flexibility

Nancy Frane was an elementary school teacher who was enrolled full-time in the university's masters program for experienced teachers. Nancy Frane's (1992) action research was part of a larger study that investigated the conceptual levels of teaching interns and the interns' perceived need for structure before and during their year of supervised internship (using a model of conceptual development described by Hunt, 1981, and Miller, 1981). In our collaborative supervision model prospective interns and prospective cooperating teachers meet, converse, observe each other working with children, and eventually choose to contract with each other for the following full year of

internship. The school-university collaborative in teacher education believes this process of matching interns and cooperating teachers is more democratic than the traditional model where teaching interns are simply assigned to a cooperating teacher. Nancy Frane's action research asked: In what ways would interns' needs for structure as predicted by their conceptual level scores influence their choice of cooperating teacher? In Spring, 1992, Nancy Frane interviewed six interns who all contracted to do the full-year internship with cooperating teachers at the same partnership elementary school. Nancy looked at the relationship between the conceptual level scores and the prospective interns' own predictions about their need for structure. The overall intent was to compare the needs for structure of interns with lower conceptual level scores versus interns with higher scores. Key aspects of her action research include (1) a good overview of the literature in developmental supervision at the time the study took place and (2) highlights from the voices of prospective interns as they look ahead to the type of environment they think they'll need during the following year of internship.

Supporting the "Teacher as Learner": Interns and Cooperating Teachers in an Elementary School Site

Elizabeth Chamberlain, Mary Jane Moran, and Mildred Struck were doctoral students in the1993 course who worked together with me to complete the final cycle of the action research study discussed above by interviewing the interns from Nancy Frane's study during the teaching internship year and also interviewing the cooperating teachers, the university supervisor, and the school principal about the interns' needs for structure. We wondered how the interns' perceptions of their needs for structure would change once they are actually in the full-year internship. Do interns' perceptions reflect their

conceptual level scores? We asked the cooperating teachers and supervisor to describe their own styles of supervision and how they adapt to an intern's needs for structure. We assessed the cooperating teachers' conceptual level scores and wondered if, as predicted in the literature, we would see a relationship between the conceptual level score of the cooperating teacher and her ability to adapt to the needs of the intern. Some key ideas about collaborative supervision evidenced in this study (see Oja, Struck, Chamberlain, & Moran, 1997) are (1) the crucial placement process that prospective interns and cooperating teachers engage in to contract with each other for the internship year, (2) how the cooperating teachers in this partnership site perceive their role as mentors to the interns, and (3) the recognition of cooperating teachers as learners, too, in this partnership school that is part of the school-university collaborative in teacher education.

Questioning the Emphasis on Developmental Theory

One question that can be asked about the action research studies concerns the emphasis on developmental theory. The retrospective accounts of the ensuing years since the studies were completed helps us gain insight into the influence of a developmental tradition on everyday practice over time, in comparison to other reflective teaching traditions such as academic literacy, technical competence, and social reconstruction. Liston and Zeichner (1991) distinguish among these four versions of reflective teaching, each based upon a specific tradition of reform in 20th century U.S teacher education. The academic tradition focuses on representation of subject matter. The social efficiency tradition focuses on teaching strategies suggested by research on teaching. The developmentalist tradition focuses on patterns of thinking and developmental growth. The social reconstructionist tradition focuses on school and classroom actions that

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contribute toward greater equity and social justice. Although Zeichner and Gore's action research projects with student teachers (1995) were generally weighted toward the social reconstructionist tradition, Zeichner and Gore suggest that none of the four traditions is "sufficient by itself", and that "good teaching and teacher education need to attend to all of the elements that are brought into focus by the various traditions (p. 16)." I find the Zeichner and Gore discussion helpful as I think about the action research projects undertaken by supervisors in our school-university partnerships. The supervisors focused on interns' thinking and developmental growth because they were in a course generally weighted toward the developmental tradition. Less prominent in their action research studies are the elements of the other three traditions. One cannot assume, however, that subject matter representation, teaching strategies suggested from research on teaching, or educational equity are neglected by these supervisors in their overall supervision of beginning teachers. These supervisors' action research studies may be informative to those readers wishing to learn more about self-study action research on developmental elements of supervision.

A related issue that has been raised is the need for action researchers to be even more self-critical in their approach to developmental theory. Developmental theory has taken a number of twists and turns in the last few years and this, too, may not be readily apparent in the action research studies that are outlined in this paper. I consider these action research studies to be beginning cycles of learning as these supervisors become aware of the impact of the developmental tradition upon their own practice. Becoming more self-critical in relation to the developmental tradition (or any of the other three traditions, for that matter) will come later, with more experience and a broader

knowledge base. A seasoned supervisor would never look at their practice in supervision from just one perspective, but that seasoned supervisor didn't learn all the perspectives at once either. The value of the supervisors' action research is in the focus on the developmental tradition and the descriptions of initial research in adult development by individuals who use action research to understand more about supervision. The theoretical and research bases for the developmental tradition have grown in recent years as cognitive-developmental researchers have struggled to address numerous questions posed from post-modernists. A number of recent publications provide responses to the questions as well as continuing reliability and validity of some measures of adult development. It is not the purpose of this paper to summarize their work. Instead the interested reader is recommended to those publications. (See for example, Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999; Loevinger, 1998; Kegan, 1994; King & Kitchener, 1994.)

Summary

Over the last fifteen years many people have debated the validity and value of action research by teachers (for example, Hensen, 1997; Hollingsworth, 1997). My writings have tended to focus on the value of role-taking and reflection in action research to teachers' professional development (for example, Oja, 2000).

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Zeichner, K. & Gore (1995)

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